US Army Corps of Engineers®

INFORMATION PAPER

Upper Mississippi River - Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study

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PURPOSE OF THIS INFORMATION PAPER. The purpose of this paper is to provide information on the revised schedule for the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway Study. Recent observed traffic volumes moving on the Upper Mississippi River (UMR) and Illinois Waterway (IWW) differ from past forecasts that were being used in developing the study. Hence, the Corps contracted a review of the long-term traffic forecasts. In order to incorporate the revised traffic forecasts, which are lower than the earlier forecasts, into the alternative plan evaluations, the study schedule has been revised.

STUDY/PROJECT DESCRIPTION. The study addresses the need, economic justification, and environmental acceptability of navigation improvements on the UMR and the IWW System. The study area lies within portions of Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, and Wisconsin. The system's principal problem is delays to commercial navigation traffic due to limited lockage capacity. Built in the 1930s, the navigation system was designed to accommodate 600-foot-long tows. Lock chambers 1200-feet in length are present at Locks 19, 26, and 27. Today, tows routinely approximate 1,100 feet in length, so that costly, time-consuming double-lockages are necessary. Currently, double lockages take approximately 1-3/4 hours on average, which is nearly twice the time (about 55 minutes) required for a single lockage.

BACKGROUND. The Rock Island, St. Louis, St. Paul, and New Orleans Districts of the Mississippi Valley Division are investigating the feasibility of navigation improvements on the Upper Mississippi River and Illinois Waterway. In addition to a "no-action" alternative, the study includes formulation, evaluation, and comparison of various alternative plans comprised of potential small- and large-scale measures. These measures are combined at different lock locations to give an array of alternative plans to evaluate and compare. The alternative plans will be evaluated fully in terms of cost and benefits, engineering feasibility, and environmental effects. The plans will then be considered with regard to completeness, effectiveness, efficiency, and acceptability as required by Federal planning regulations.

STATUS. Because recent observed traffic volumes moving on the UMR and IWW differ from past forecasts, the Corps contracted a review of the long-term traffic forecasts. The original traffic forecasts considered data observed through 1993. The contractor reviewed and updated the forecasts and provided a new draft forecast report. Grain transportation and economic subject-matter experts from North Dakota State University reviewed this report. The Corps determined that the revised traffic forecasts, which are lower than the earlier forecasts, should be used in estimating project benefits and economic impacts. The study schedule called for a draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to be available for public review by September 30, 2000. The revised schedule announced today calls for this public review to begin in September 2001. The study schedule was revised to allow incorporation of the revised traffic forecast data into the alternative plan evaluations. Alternatives must be evaluated for site-specific and system-wide environmental effects, and measures to avoid and minimize or mitigate these effects must be developed.

The following milestones reflect the revised schedule:

September 2000	Completed traffic forecast revisions
December 2000	Ecological Modeling and Environmental Impacts Assessment Completed
January 2001	Environmental Mitigation Costs of Alternatives Identified
February 2001	Complete Economic Analyses, Compare Plans and Tentatively Select Plan
March – August 2001	Corps Technical and Policy Review of Draft Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
September 2001	Release Draft Feasibility Report and EIS for Public and Independent External Review
October 2001	Hold Public Meetings
December 2001	End Formal Comment and Independent External Review Period
March 2002	Report Revised and Finalized in Response to Public and Independent External Review and District Commander Submits Report and EIS to Division Commander
April 2002	Division Commander Issues Public Notice that a Plan has been Selected and the Final Report has been Forwarded to the Corps Headquarters for Washington-Level Review.
July 2002	Chief of Engineers Submits Report to ASA(CW)

Additional information on the study can be accessed on the World Wide Web through the Navigation Study home page at: http://www.mvr.usace.army.mil/pdw/nav_study.htm

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